(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether the number of poor families in the State of Uttarakhand is less than national average and whether any scheme is under consideration with Government to allocate more foodgrains to such States under the Public Distribution System?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) No, Sir. There has not been any reduction in last two years in the allocations of food grains to Uttarakhand for BPL and AAY ration card holders under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS). As per allocation norms, allocations of food grains under TPDS are made @ 35 kg per family per month for all accepted numbers of BPL and AAY families for all the States/UTs, including the State of Uttarakhand. This norm is based on 1993-94 poverty estimates of the Planning Commission and population estimates of Registrar General of India, as on 1.3.2000 or the number of families actually identified and ration cards issued by States/UTs, whichever is less.

Allocations of food grains for the Above Poverty Line (APL) families are made depending upon availability of food grains in the Central Pool. Because of shortage of food grains in the Central Pool during 2006-07 and 2007-08, it was decided from June 2006 and April 2007 to base allocations on offtake during the earlier three years. This was done to limit allocations within the stocks available in the Central Pool.

(c) As per 1993-94 poverty estimates of Planning Commission, 40.85% of population in Uttarakhand was living below poverty line. The national level of population below poverty line during 1993-94 was 36%. Since full allocations of food grains under TPDS are being made to the State as per allocation norms for all accepted numbers of BPL families, there is no proposal to further increase BPL/AAY allocations.

Herbal cure from malaria

*16. SHRI N.K. SINGH: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a plant named Gonmostama found in the North Eastern part of the country has been found to be an effective cure against malaria;

(b) whether Government plans to conduct further research on the effectiveness of the plant for curing malaria; and

(c) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. ANBUMANI RAMDOSS): (a) to (c) Yes Sir, Defence Research Laboratory (DRL), Tezpur, Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) under Ministry of Defence has identified two species of Gomphostema, which have the potential cure both types of Malaria *i.e.* Plasmodhim vivax & Plasmodium falciparum. Both the plant species are abundantly available in the Foothills of Assam & Arunachal Pradesh border. DRL Tejpur carried out preliminary research with the crude extract of the subject plant *i.e.* Gomphostema and the in-vitro tests with the same was found to be effective against strains of

Plasmodium falciparum. Encouraged by the results in the preliminary studies, DRDO is currently undertaking advanced research with the plant *i.e.* isolation and characterization of the active compound which is expected to improve the efficacy against Malaria.

Hike in sugar price

*17. SHRI VIJAY JAWAHARLAL DARDA:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether with no firmed up figure available yet on the estimated shortfall in sugarcane output this season and sugar prices shooting up, Ministry is moving to seek permission of Government of importing raw-sugar;

(b) if so, whether Ministry plans to take permission to allow mills to import raw sugar;

(c) whether the duty is expected to fall due to low acreage of the crop followed by erratic weather conditions especially in Maharashtra, Karnataka and parts of U.P.;

(d) whether prices have already risen in retail markets to Rs 21 per kg. from Rs.17 per kg. corresponding last year; and

(e) if so, whether any final decision has been taken?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (e) As per the first advance estimates released by the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, the sugarcane production in the current sugar season 2008-09 is estimated to be 2946 lac tons as against production of 3405 lac tons (fourth advance estimates) in the last sugar season 2007-08. The lower production of sugarcane is mainly due to reported shortfall in both acreage as well as productivity on account of delay and deficiency of rains in the south and unseasonal rains elsewhere. Also, there has been a greater diversion of sugarcane to gur and khandsari units. This has led to an increasing trend in sugar prices during the current sugar season 2008-09.

The retail prices of sugar have been in the range of Rs. 18 to Rs. 24.50 per kilogram during the period December, 2008 to January, 2009 as compared to the range of Rs.14 to Rs. 20 per kilogram prevalent correspondingly during December, 2007 to January, 2008 in various centres of the country.

In order to increase availability of sugar in the country, the Government has allowed sugar mills to import raw sugar under Advance Authorization 'Scheme up to 30.09.2009 and permitted sugar factories to sell processed raw sugar in the domestic market and fulfill export obligation on 'ton-to-ton' basis within 24 months.

The Government is continuously monitoring the situation to ensure adequate availability of sugar in the country.